



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 117th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 167

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2021

No. 23

Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Lord of life, help us to know You better that we may love You more.

Provide our lawmakers opportunities to be guided by Your wisdom and strengthened by Your presence. May Your presence lead them to a spiritual maturity that will honor You. Grant that this maturity will inspire them to be a part of the solution and not part of the problem. Show our Senators what they can do to lead our Nation toward a more perfect Union.

Stay close to us, mighty God, for we are Your children.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Denis Richard McDonough, of Maryland, to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

1776 COMMISSION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, in his inaugural address, President Biden said his "whole soul" was in the cause of "Bringing America together. Uniting our people. And uniting our Nation"—very worthy things to speak and especially in an inaugural address.

He also recognized that Americans have serious disagreements. Everyone knows that our country is deeply divided politically. I know from his time in the Senate that President Biden understands that people of good will can have honest disagreements about policy.

So he knows that unity does not mean dropping deeply held beliefs and accepting his own policy agenda. As he said—and I have two quotes here—"Every disagreement doesn't have to be a cause of total war" and "Disagreement must not lead to disunion." Real unity requires rediscovering what binds us together as Americans even when we have strongly disagreed politically.

As I have often said, our Nation is unique in human history in that it was founded not on the basis of common ethnic identity or loyalty to, let's say,

a Monarch but on certain enduring principles. Those principles are best articulated in the simple but elegant words of the Declaration of Independence. And you all read these regularly, I am sure.

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

It is a common commitment to this ideal that has bound us together as Americans from the beginning. Our patriot forefathers concluded that these principles were worth fighting for and took up arms in an improbable quest to defeat the largest and best trained military at that particular time. This included many Black patriots who fought for American independence—a unifying fact that I believe deserves a monument on the National Mall, something that I have been working toward for years.

I want to quote Margaret Thatcher. She once observed this. It is a fairly long quote, so bear with me.

Americans and Europeans alike sometimes forget how unique is the United States of America. No other nation has been created so swiftly and successfully. No other nation has been built upon an idea—the idea of liberty. No other nation has so successfully combined people of different races and nations within a single culture. Both the founding fathers of the United States and successive waves of immigrants to your country were determined to create a new identity. Whether in flight from persecution or from poverty, the huddled masses have, with few exceptions, welcomed American values, the American way of life and American opportunities. And America herself has bound them to her with powerful bonds of patriotism and pride. The European nations are not and can never be like this. They are the product of history and not of philosophy.

End of Thatcher's quote.

This quote from a British leader is one of the best summaries that I have read about American exceptionalism. The term "American exceptionalism" is often misunderstood, perhaps due to

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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